DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 364 477 SO 023 607

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TITLE Are There Reasonable Grounds for War? Public Talk Series.
INSTITUTION Topsfield Foundation, Pomfret, CT. Study Circles Resource Center.
PUB DATE Jan 92
NOTE 27p.; For other items in the series, see SO 023 604-609.
AVAILABLE FROM Study Circles Resource Center, P.O. Box 203, Pomfret, CT 06258 ($2).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; *Discussion Groups; Ethics; Foreign Policy; International Relations; Leaders Guides; Military Science; *National Defense; Policy Formation; *Political Issues; Treaties; *War; World Problems
IDENTIFIERS *Study Circles

ABSTRACT

This program guide assists in discussions of critical social and political issues by providing a framework for considering which conditions warrant a use of military force. The guide examines the question from two different but related angles: military force and those reasons for war most commonly offered. The document includes the following sections: (1) "Are There Reasonable Grounds for War?"--A Framework for Discussion; (2) A Summary of Major Discussion Points; (3) Part 1, Ethical Considerations--Four Possible Positions in Answer to "Are There Reasonable Ground for War?" (4) Part 2, Policy Consideration--Commonly Accepted Grounds for War; (5) A Summary of the Basic Criteria of the Just-War Doctrine; (6) Background Readings; (7) Suggestions for Leading this Discussion; (8) Suggested Discussion Questions; (9) Leading a Study Circle; (10) Suggestions for Participants; (11) Follow-up Form; and (12) Public Talk Series Programs and other resources available from the Study Circles Resource Center. (NLA)

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STUDY CIRCLES RESOURCE CENTER

# Public Talk Series

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## ARE THERE REASONABLE GROUNDS FOR WAR?

*"History, theology, and philosophy will show that every enlightened civilization has had a sense of right and wrong and a need to try to distinguish them."*

Michael Josephson, ethicist
from Bill Moyers' *A World of Ideas*

SO 023 607

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*Are There Reasonable Grounds for War?*
is a project of The Study Circles Resource Center
of Topsfield Foundation, Inc.

January 1992

Authors: Martha McCoy and Lynn Pasquerella, Ph.D.

The Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC) is funded by Topsfield Foundation, Inc., a private, non-profit, non-advocacy foundation dedicated to advancing deliberative democracy and improving the quality of public life in the United States. SCRC carries out this mission by promoting the use of small-group, democratic, highly participatory discussions known as study circles.

Please write the Study Circles Resource Center at PO Box 203, Pomfret, CT 06258, call (203) 928-2616, or FAX (203) 928-3713 for more information on study circles and the Study Circles Resource Center.

January 1992

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Dear study circle organizer,

In a democracy, it is crucial that the public have input into the decisions government makes. Citizens must listen to a variety of viewpoints, consider the consequences of all positions, and make hard choices. The Study Circles Resource Center's Public Talk Series is based on this belief. The programs of the series are designed to assist in the discussion of critical social and political issues; each offers a balanced, non-partisan presentation of a spectrum of views.

*Are There Reasonable Grounds for War?* provides a framework for considering which conditions, if any, warrant a use of military force. This is a question that Americans will continue to face in a variety of settings. This program examines the question from two different but related angles. The first perspective is that of ethical considerations: which ethical principles should influence our nation's use of military force? The second part of the program examines the question by presenting those reasons for war that are most commonly offered by policymakers and members of the general public. These include, but are not limited to, reasons derived from ethical principles.

During this time of relative peace and global transition, we present this program as an opportunity for public, conscious deliberation about the appropriate grounds for war. This type of dialogue will resume with new energy the next time we are faced with the immediate possibility of war, but in the meantime it remains a relevant discussion. Current decisions about foreign and defense policy will play a part in creating future situations that may call for us to use force. The answer to the question "Are there reasonable grounds for war?" has very real consequences for U.S. policies, for deeply held values, and for individual human lives.

**Organizing a study circle using this material**

*Are There Reasonable Grounds for War?* can be used in one or two sessions of approximately two hours each, according to the interests of your group. You will need to recruit between 5 and 20 participants, decide on a time and place for the meeting(s), select a discussion leader, photocopy the materials (participants will need copies of items marked with an asterisk in the table of contents), and distribute them to participants at least a few days before the meeting.

Your most important task is choosing the discussion leader. This person need not be an expert on war or the ethics of warfare, but should have some familiarity with the issues. The leader should be able to encourage participants to freely express their thoughts while he or she preserves some focus to the session as a whole. A commitment to balance

and impartiality is essential: the leader's job is to draw out the appeal of each position so that participants will recognize the difficulties and tensions inherent in the question of war. Included for the leader's use are "Suggestions for Leading *Are There Reasonable Grounds for War?*" and "Suggested Discussion Questions" as well as general advice in "Leading a Study Circle."

**Organizing further study circles**

The Study Circles Resource Center makes this material available in part to encourage discussion of this particular issue; our end goal, however, is to encourage citizen debate on the wide range of issues – whether local or national – confronting our society. We hope that this material will inspire your group to meet regularly to discuss issues of common concern.

Several options are available for groups that want to continue meeting for discussion. You may wish to use another Public Talk Series program, or a program from our clearinghouse list of discussion programs developed by a variety of organizations. If your group would like to take on an issue for which no ready-made discussion package is available, a few good newspaper or magazine articles can provide the basis for dialogue. SCRC has a pamphlet on developing study circle programs that you will find helpful for such an endeavor. See the back cover of this program for a complete list of resources from SCRC.

We invite you to take part in the richly rewarding discussion that can result when you meet with your peers, associates, friends, and neighbors in small, informal gatherings to discuss the concerns of our society. And we encourage you to communicate the outcomes of your discussion to relevant policymakers, for only then can your informed judgment influence policy.

Paul J. Aicher
Chairman

# Are There Reasonable Grounds for War?

## A Framework for Discussion

Because world politics is changing so rapidly, it is increasingly difficult to anticipate the kinds of situations in which the U.S. may consider the use of military force.* Whenever war seems imminent, the question of whether the circumstances of the time require or justify the use of force becomes a matter for widespread national discussion. Even though the U.S. is not in a war at this time, continuing decisions regarding our relations with other countries and about the size and composition of our military forces reveal and influence our judgments about the reasonable grounds for war.

The following scenarios may help you to consider this issue. Do any of these constitute adequate reasons for the use of force? Would you qualify any of these scenarios before agreeing that they presented adequate reasons for the use of armed force?

• *Iraq claims that its sovereignty is being violated by U.N. inspectors and that it will continue to build whatever weapons it considers necessary for its own security. After continued tension between Iraqi officials and U.N. weapons inspectors, the Iraqi air force shoots down U.N. helicopters, killing some members of the U.N. team. It is known that Iraq still has some missile launchers at its disposal. Countries around the world fear that Iraq may be furthering its development of atomic weapons. Should the U.S. use military force in order to remove the Iraqi government?*

• *The government of South Africa shifts to the right under pressure from right-wing public opinion and right-wing private armies; as a consequence, negotiations between the government and the African National Congress break down. Polarization worsens, chaos follows, and the government uses violence against protesting blacks. In the name of stability the government places many anti-apartheid leaders under house arrest. The African National Congress believes that armed struggle is now the only way in which blacks will achieve their rightful place in society and government. The resistance movement asks for help from the U.S. The South African government expects that the U.S. will not interfere, since the U.S. long depended upon the South African government to maintain stability in the region and because it has remained a reliable source of strategic minerals for the U.S. What should the U.S. do?*

• *As a result of economic hardship and resulting chaos in the former Soviet Union, authoritarian governments arise in Russia and several of the other former republics. There is a desire on the part of these authoritarian rulers to reassert some control over Eastern Europe. There are enough disgruntled and frightened members of the former Soviet army to go along with this scheme, and they refuse to continue their withdrawal from Eastern Europe. In Czechoslovakia there is a revolt against this foreign presence, and in armed conflict the democratic government of Czechoslovakia seems to be losing ground. The Czech government calls for NATO paratroopers to come to its aid. As a member of NATO, the U.S. has to decide what to do. There are still many thousands of nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union that are aimed at the U.S.; also, there are still "small" nuclear weapons on the battlefields of Europe. What should the U.S. do?*

• *The talks in the Middle East bog down, even though the U.S. puts pressure on all sides to come to*

* Notes on terminology:

1) In keeping with everyday language, the terms "war" and "use of force" are used synonymously in this program; both are used to denote conflict between nations carried on by their armed forces. In other more precise usages, war is used to denote only a formal declaration of war; it is also given a precise definition by social scientists who wish to categorize and study it. According to one generally accepted definition, "war" must entail the battle deaths of at least 1,000 soldiers over a year.

2) The term "reasonable" is intentionally ambiguous. Determining what it means to you and your group is partially the purpose of this discussion. The term can encompass moral judgments, considerations of national interest, or both.

*an agreement. This diplomatic stalemate, in combination with the inflexible internal political situations in the states of the region, leads to fear and militaristic rhetoric, further escalating tensions. Israel, detecting the possibility of a preemptive strike from some of the Arab states to regain disputed territories, strikes first. Since the U.S. is now the lone superpower, it has been trying to act as an "honest broker" in the region, but is conflicted about what to do in the war because of its traditional alliance with Israel. As a complicating factor, it is not known how many states in the region have chemical and nuclear weapons. In the case of war between Israel and some or all of the Arab states, what should the U.S. do?*

At the end of 1990 the U.S. public and policymakers entered into a dialogue about whether to go to war against Iraq. There were months for the discussion – a unusually long time in comparison with other pre-war debates in U.S. history. The debate contained two interlocking components. The first strand evaluated our aims and asked whether war was necessary in order to achieve them. A second strand of the debate centered around the morality of the war: would the war be a "just war"? Could it be? Both components of the debate addressed the central question of whether there were reasonable grounds for going to war.

This was a new situation but not a new question for the people of the United States. The question of an adequate rationale for war has arisen each time the U.S. has used its armed forces or has prepared for the possibility. There are no easy answers, whether one is considering the pragmatic necessity for war or the moral questions surrounding it. The two sets of questions are bound to intermingle; though there is no common frame of reference for deciding what is ethical, there is a widespread belief that ethical considerations should have some influence on policy. When these questions are brought to bear on a quickly shifting and unpredictable international situation, there is little opportunity for real deliberation.

Since the U.S. has the strongest military in the world, it is important to think now about how the U.S. should use that power. What goals are worthy of war? Decisions about the defense budget, about where to station troops, about what kinds of weapons to acquire, and about what kinds of aid to give other nations will all affect and reflect our beliefs about the necessity and morality of armed force. Experts can offer informed opinions about whether the use of military force will achieve a certain goal and at what costs, but they have no unique answers about whether a goal is worth those costs – that is a value judgment that, in a democracy, each of us has to make.

There is no consensus on either ethical principles or the definition of the national interest. Even the Judeo-Christian tradition offers more than one standard by which to judge the morality of armed conflict. Though some strains of Christian thought argue that fighting and killing are always wrong, even in war, most argue that under certain conditions war can be morally justified. The doctrine which states those conditions, the "just-war doctrine," is itself open to a wide range of interpretations when applied to actual situations.

Ever since the United States emerged from World War II with the strongest military on earth, its decisions about the use of military force have had great significance for the rest of the world. In the 45 years that followed, U.S. decisions about war and preparations for war took into account the two principal threats of the Soviet Union and nuclear weapons. Until the Cold War ended, most of the debate in the U.S. about what constituted reasonable grounds for war centered around either the adequacy of anti-communism as a rationale for the use of force or around the morality of nuclear threats and nuclear warfare.

Nuclear weapons are still with us, but to many people they seem less threatening since the superpower rivalry has ended. The Soviet Union has disintegrated, and some of the former republics have formed a Commonwealth of Independent States. Much of the rest of world political arrangements are also undergoing radical change. In the past three years we have witnessed not only the end of the Cold War, but a change of political arrangements in Eastern Europe, new aggressions in the Middle East that led to the Gulf War, and a proliferation of advanced weapons technologies around the globe. It is not clear what kinds of situations will take the place of the threatening

but fairly predictable context of the Cold War. Even as citizens and policymakers around the world express hopes for international cooperation, we realize that the end of Cold War did not mean the end of war. We will have to grapple anew with the meaning of security and with the purposes of military force.

To stimulate a balanced discussion of these issues, this program presents two ways of examining the question "Are there reasonable grounds for war?" These two ways reflect the two strands of the pre-Gulf War debate, the ethical and the pragmatic. Even though the positions in this program need not be tied to any particular conflict or nation, for the purposes of this discussion they are presented in the context of U.S. policy.

As circumstances arise that seem to call for the use of force, the public and policymakers will be reconsidering the issue of the reasonable grounds for war. The pre-Gulf War debate will be repeated in new contexts. We present this program as an opportunity for public, conscious preparation for these situations.

# A Summary of Major Discussion Points

## Part I – Ethical Considerations: Four possible positions in answer to "Are there reasonable grounds for war?"

**Position 1 – The answer of absolute pacifism.** There is never a good enough reason for going to war. Even though there are many just causes that we should work for, even at great personal and national sacrifice, there is a duty to remain non-violent that overrides all other considerations.

**Position 2 – The answer of conditional pacifism.** There are some causes that are worth fighting for; the problem in this day and age is the weapons with which we do battle. The methods we have for fighting with one another far outweigh in their consequences what might be gained for any cause, no matter how just.

**Position 3 – The answer of idealism.** There are causes worth fighting for, but we must seriously judge our motives before committing to any war. Also, as we fight we must take care not to use any methods whose consequences outweigh the good we are trying to accomplish.

**Position 4 – The answer of pragmatism.** War is sometimes necessary if we wish to preserve what is vital to our nation. Even though we don't usually give self-preservation the status of a moral principle, it is a necessary goal in a world dominated by power rather than by moral considerations.

## Part II – Policy Considerations: Commonly accepted grounds for war

1) **Defense of one's own territory.** Fighting to counter an invasion of one's territory is universally accepted as reasonable grounds for war.

2) **Defense of the nation's most important values.** Most people believe that security involves more than territorial defense; it also includes the preservation of what is most essential to the nation. What is "most essential" could be related to values, the social structure, the political system, or what has been broadly characterized as "our way of life."

3) **Defense of vital material goods.** Many people believe that security involves defense of our economic well-being. Since we live in an interconnected world, many of the resources we depend on are purchased from other countries; force is sometimes deemed necessary to maintain access to these goods.

4) **Defense of others.** This can be undertaken on the basis of any of the other grounds cited above – for example, as a form of self-defense or to defend democracy or human rights. Military intervention to come to the aid of a weak state that is the target of aggression is justified in international law under the principle of collective security (when the intervention is authorized by the United Nations).



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# Part I – Ethical Considerations

## Four possible positions in answer to "Are there reasonable grounds for war?"

There is no common frame of reference within the world or even within our nation for deciding which ethical principles, if any, should guide the behavior of our leaders as they make decisions about war and peace. The following broad positions offer a starting point for discussion; they are not the only positions, but represent a range of views within American cultural and moral traditions.

**Position 1 – The answer of absolute pacifism.** ***There is never a good enough reason for going to war. Even though there are many just causes that we should work for, even at great personal and national sacrifice, there is a duty to remain nonviolent that overrides all other considerations.***

War can never be morally justified; by its very nature it is wrong. In any form war is unjust because it involves the intentional taking of human life. The use of deadly violence against other human beings is always wrong. There is no other value, including freedom, that takes precedence over the value of human life. Even though individuals are entitled to defend the basic rights they possess as human beings, there are moral limits to the extent people should go to defend their rights. Just as it is morally impermissible to torture another, even under the threat of being tortured yourself, it is wrong to kill even under the threat of death. Killing is killing, whether done as an act of aggression or as an act of self-defense.

Even though war by definition involves organized, state-approved violence (that is, decisions to go to war are made by representatives of national entities), it is still individuals who must take violent action to carry it out, and individuals are the ones who die. Therefore, the use of military violence for any reason, regardless of the circumstances, is wrong.

There are circumstances under which the use of armed force would seem legitimate, such as in defense of innocent lives against a brutal and unprovoked attack. But there are always alternatives to violence. Nonviolent resistance, which is not "passive" and requires great courage, is always morally preferable. Even if it does not immediately succeed in halting the aggression, in the long run it will succeed. In the even longer run, it will contribute to a less violent world. Readiness and willingness to use armed force contribute to an endless cycle of violence.

In addition, the belief that we might have to go to war to protect what we value and the preparations we must make to ready ourselves for that possibility have subtle but real effects on our society. The belief that violence is useful contributes to a acceptance of violence at all levels. Also, believing that we must remain ready to kill others keeps us from realizing the common humanity of everyone around the globe, regardless of nationality. All acts of killing other humans require a distancing and dehumanization of the person killed. Psychologically, in order to be able to kill someone, one must deny that the enemy is a fellow human being with the same foibles and fears, hopes and dreams. Modern war has an even greater potential for dehumanization than did war in the past, because in many ways it is "faceless." Because of modern weaponry, in most cases soldiers no longer have to come face to face with those they kill. Killing at a distance allows us to forget that we are indeed killing fellow human beings.

In brief, the duty to remain nonviolent overrides all other duties and transcends all other considerations.

**Position 2 – The answer of conditional pacifism.** ***There are some causes that are worth fighting for; the problem in this day and age is the weapons with which we do battle. The methods we have for fighting with one another far outweigh in their consequences what might be gained for any cause, no matter how just.***

This position comes from taking seriously two of the conditions specified by the just-war doctrine – the principle of proportionality and the principle of discrimination. The first principle states that there must be proportionality between the cause for going to war and the means used in waging war. The overall aim in going to war must be sufficiently good to outweigh the anticipated evils of waging war. Modern weaponry makes it impossible to live up to the principle of proportionality; it is so destructive that its consequences will always outweigh any good that could come from war. This century has been labeled the "century of total war" because the creation of new military technologies and the possibility of their mass production have made it possible to lay waste to vast areas of cities and towns at only a moment's notice, killing large numbers of soldiers and civilians. Even though a nation may intend to keep a conflict "limited," there is never a guarantee than it will not escalate into a wider conflict with great destruction.

The principle of discrimination concerns just *conduct* in war and states that the use of force must be such that it allows for the distinction between combatants and noncombatants. According to this principle, it is permissible to undertake an action when the deaths of noncombatants are foreseen as long as those deaths are not strictly intended. Modern methods of warfare make it difficult or impossible to distinguish between combatants and noncombatants; the assessments of the nature of a target are often incorrect. Since modern methods of warfare do not allow for making the distinction, then we know that innocent people will be killed. Even though it is psychologically easier to drop bombs on people that we cannot see, it is not better morally to kill civilians with bombs than it is to kill them face to face with guns and bayonets. Even sophisticated military technologies like "smart bombs" are so destructive that the killing of large numbers of innocent civilians cannot be guarded against. The killing of innocent noncombatants in war is as wrong as the killing of innocent people during peacetime; we must morally condemn acts we know will have such results.

One variation of conditional pacifism has been called "nuclear pacifism." According to this argument, the principles of proportionality and discrimination might not necessarily lead to the judgment that all modern warfare is immoral, but would classify all nuclear warfare (and threats of nuclear warfare) as immoral.

In sum of the general position, there is no state whose preservation is worth the potential loss of life that could result from modern warfare.

**Position 3 – The answer of idealism.** ***There are causes worth fighting for, but we must seriously judge our motives before committing to any war. Also, as we fight we must take care not to use any methods whose consequences outweigh the good we are trying to accomplish.***

Values are meaningless unless there are some situations under which we would defend them; that means that sometimes we must be willing to kill and die for what we hold dear. But even in the urgency of crisis situations, when national decisions are being made about war, we must carefully scrutinize our motives and actions according to moral standards. In deciding both whether to use armed force and what kinds of actions are legitimate as we fight a war, we must let moral judgments guide our actions. Otherwise, fighting in order to protect our highest values would hold no meaning: we would be destroying our values in order to protect them.

Which moral standards should we use? While there is no common ethical framework in our culture, our Judeo-Christian heritage does lead us to some common ideas of morality. The just-war doctrine reflects the consideration of generations of thinkers in the Christian church and therefore likely reflects the standards that many in our nation would like to uphold, whatever their personal religious beliefs. The criteria developed in just-war thinking can and should be applied, both in the initial decision to resort to war and in the decisions about what kinds of force to use.

Especially pertinent when deciding whether the grounds for war are adequate are these decisions:

1) Is the cause just? Is this war necessary for self-defense (or the defense of allies) against unjust aggression?

2) Have we exhausted all alternatives to war?

3) Do we have the right intention? Are we going to war in order to establish lasting peace?

4) Is the overall aim in going to war sufficiently good to outweigh the anticipated evils of waging war?

Just as we hold individual acts of violence to moral standards, we must hold our collective actions to some standards. Since war is a form of organized violence performed on behalf of a country for certain national goals, it is more complicated to evaluate it in moral terms than it is to evaluate individual actions, but we must try our best to do so. Even though there is no enforceable law in the world community (since there is no final authority in international affairs), there are some minimum standards of conduct that we should try to promote and adhere to in international relations. Just because there is no enforceable law doesn't mean there are no standards; after all, most of us refrain from killing because we believe it is wrong, not because there is a law against it.

Even though humanity is far from agreeing on a code of conduct when it comes to war, there are some restrictions in warfare that are almost universally agreed upon (for example, there are treaties outlawing the use of poison gas or germ warfare). This demonstrates that nations are capable of limiting themselves in the name of moral principles.

If we take the just-war criteria seriously, we may have to forego certain wars, even if they may seem to be required by the "national interest" as commonly defined. Also, there may be instances in war when we would have to give up some short-run military advantage in order to hold ourselves to these moral standards. For example, in World War II U.S. officials justified the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by their calculations that many more American lives would have been lost in the land invasion of Japan that would otherwise have been required in order to bring the Japanese to surrender and the war to an end. But according to the standards of the just war doctrine these bombings were not morally justifiable and therefore should not have taken place, even if American planners were correct in their assessment of U.S. lives to be lost.

Some would argue that the moral approach is also usually in our own best interest over the long run, even if in the short term it seems to require national sacrifice. To use the preceding example of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, taking the moral approach would also have prevented or slowed the introduction of atomic weapons into world politics.

**Position 4 – The answer of pragmatism.** ***War is sometimes necessary if we wish to preserve what is vital to our nation. Even though we don't usually give self-preservation the status of a moral principle, it is a necessary goal in a world dominated by power rather than by moral considerations.***

Since there is no final authority in international affairs, there are no binding moral obligations among nations. Nations may use high-sounding reasons to justify their actions, but in reality relations among nations are relations of power, unconstrained by moral rules. In such a world weak or naive countries are frequently the victims of aggression; the only countries that survive are those that remain ready and willing to use force when survival calls for it.

Whenever the national interest is in conflict with morality, the former should take precedence. The national interest is, of course, subject to interpretation, but there is usually sufficient consensus about its definition when something essential to us is being threatened. The duties to further the national interest and to protect our lives and the lives of our allies override all other duties. Whether in the decision to resort to war or in decisions about how to use our forces once war has begun, we must think first and foremost about what is in our best interest; sacrificing any advantage due to overriding moral principles would only jeopardize what is important. This is especially true in the case of the United States, since we have played a leading role in protecting freedom around the world; at times, the ends justify the means.

This position does not necessarily hold that there is no place for morality in policy considerations or that "anything goes." But it does state that we should never uphold a moral ideal to the point that what is in our essential interest is endangered. We should uphold moral ideals when it is practical to do so.

Once war has begun, though standards of morality can be factored into our decisions about what kinds of force to use, they should never cause us to do anything that would jeopardize our military objectives. Since we enter a conflict because we think that it is necessary and important to use armed force, we should use our military force in the most effective ways possible. At times these means may coincide with what we would consider the moral thing to do, but when by comparison a moral action would cause us to lose advantage or lose more of our own lives, we should instead do what is more effective. According to this position, then, the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were acceptable as means to gain vital military objectives, as unfortunate necessities.

Some might criticize this position as a license to do anything in the name of national interest, but notions of practicality should prohibit any nation from acting aggressively. Besides, horrible aggressions have also been perpetrated in the name of morality, but that does not invalidate ethical principles. The world would be a much more peaceful place if each country looked out for its own best interests and made sure that it was not so weak as to tempt aggression.

In sum, in a world in which aggressive countries often act without regard for moral standards, the only option we have is to do what we must in order to survive.

# Part II - Policy Considerations

## Commonly accepted grounds for war

War involves the intentional taking of human life, and the methods used to do so are often unmerciful; it is this aspect of war that motivates some to examine it with regard to ethical principles. At the same time, war is often deemed the "ultimate instrument of national influence" in high-stake situations. Can ethical considerations be reconciled with national interests? Which interpretation of ethics should guide policy? Which interpretation of the national interest should we accept? Trying to reconcile ethical norms with policy imperatives is difficult in any area of public policy, but especially so when it comes to the question of war. One interesting and arguable statement of this dilemma follows:

> War is a means for achieving an end, a weapon which can be used for good or for bad purposes. Some of these purposes for which war has been used have been accepted by humanity as worthwhile ends; indeed, war performs functions which are essential in any human society. It has been used to settle disputes, to uphold rights, to remedy wrongs; and these are surely functions which must be served. . . . One may say, without exaggeration, that no more stupid, brutal, wasteful or unfair method could ever have been imagined for such purposes, but this does not alter the situation." [Clyde Eagleton, *International Government*, rev. ed. (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1948), p. 393.]

In everyday conversation, the question of what are the reasonable grounds for war would evoke more than a discussion of ethical considerations. Even though many people would most likely make reference to ethics in their answers, they would emphasize other kinds of principles. Broadly characterized, these would entail beliefs about the proper role of the U.S. in the world and about what constitutes the national interest. These are also the primary concerns of most policymakers. The most relevant questions raised by these beliefs are: What constitutes legitimate self-interest? What is the nature of our responsibility to others?

The concepts of self-interest or national interest can be as elusive as ethical considerations when one tries to apply them to real-life situations. Hardly anyone would view war as an unmitigated good, since it entails death and destruction, but many would view it as a sometimes unfortunate necessity. That is, those who do not think that moral considerations can or should guide policy still will not take war lightly. They will try to estimate the likely cost of any war (in lives, in money, and in other values) in order to attempt to answer the question of whether what we will likely attain will be worth what we will likely have to pay.

Some would say that any nation decides to go to war strictly based upon notions of self-interest. In the absence of international law or of a consensus on international behavior, some understand this as a necessity, while others interpret it in a more harmful light, since the concept of national interest can be used to rationalize terrible aggressions.

Some of the most commonly stated reasons for going to war are listed below, along with comments and questions for your consideration. Which of these do you consider to be reasonable grounds for war? Under what circumstances? How might each of these rationales be interpreted by supporters of the various ethical positions in the previous section?

**1) Defense of one's own territory.** Fighting to counter an invasion of one's territory is universally accepted as reasonable grounds for war.

- Even this relatively straightforward rationale can become complicated, since one country can appear to be readying itself to invade another; the

threatened country may wish to make a preemptive strike for defensive reasons. When is striking first truly defensive?

• Identifying a threat is rarely clear-cut; it is based upon perceptions of another country's capabilities and intentions. For example, during the Cold War the U.S. sometimes made the argument that countering communist aggression anywhere constituted an act of self-defense: if communist aggression were to succeed anywhere it would gain momentum and eventually threaten the U.S. itself. Our entry into both world wars was also in part derived from this reasoning.

• This rationale is also complicated by disagreement over what constitutes a nation's territory. Does a nation ever have the right to dispute internationally recognized borders?

**2) Defense of the nation's most important values.** Most people believe that security involves more than territorial defense; it also includes the preservation of what is most essential to the nation. What is "most essential" could be related to values, the social structure, the political system, or what has been broadly characterized as "our way of life."

• Defending the freedom to determine one's own political system would seem fairly straightforward. But when our values are threatened abroad, do we have the right to defend them? When does this constitute the export of ideology? Do we have the obligation to defend certain values, such as democracy or the respect for human rights?

• What about when the defense of one of our values conflicts with the defense of another one of our values? For example, U.S. intervention in behalf of governments perceived to be threatened by communism also upheld, at times, governments that violated human rights.

• We endorse the importance of national sovereignty, and yet our country was founded on the right to overthrow tyranny. Should we ever militarily intervene to support others' right to rebel against an internationally recognized government?

**3) Defense of vital material goods.** Many people believe that security involves defense of our economic well-being. Since we live in an interconnected world, many of the resources we depend on are purchased from other countries; force is sometimes deemed necessary to maintain access to these goods.

• Interpretations of what is vital, whether it is being threatened, and whether it is necessary or useful to defend it with force will vary. Is it reasonable to use force to maintain our access to economic markets in other countries?

• Is it reasonable to use force to preserve situations in which we have access to certain products at reasonable prices? Who should determine what is vital to our economic survival?

**4) Defense of others.** This can be undertaken on the basis of any of the other grounds cited above – for example, as a form of self-defense or to defend certain values such as democracy or human rights. Military intervention to come to the aid of a weak state that is the target of aggression is justified in international law under the principle of "collective security" (when the intervention is authorized by the United Nations).

• The identification of threats to other nations can run into the same kinds of complications as with identification of threats to one's own nation.

• If this is undertaken on the basis of humanitarian grounds, then are we obligated to protect any nation that falls into this category? If not, should humanitarian grounds ever be the sole justification for going to war?

• This kind of action could be undertaken on the basis of ensuring that aggression is not tolerated in the world. Does the United States have a special obligation or responsibility to uphold a certain kind of "world order"? Other nations would presumably also benefit from such an arrangement. How should their responsibility be determined? Should our decisions be based upon those of others? Should they be made in cooperation with others?

# A Summary of the Basic Criteria of the Just-War Doctrine

The doctrine of "just war" that was initiated by the early Christian church and developed by subsequent theologians continues to be discussed as a possible guide for making moral decisions about war; this doctrine played a prominent role in the national debate that took place prior to the Gulf War. Though many people had not heard of just-war doctrine before that debate, their thinking had been influenced by many of its ideas.

Just-war theory focuses on two issues:

*Just Cause for War* – When does a nation have a moral right to wage war?

*Just Conduct in War* – What restrictions, if any, does morality place on the means used in fighting a war?

**Just Cause for War**

In response to the first question, the just-war doctrine sets out the following six conditions for a nation to be morally justified in going to war. They are necessary conditions, meaning that all of them must be met in order for a war to be a just war.

Nations are justified in engaging in war if and only if:

1) There is *just cause*. This condition requires that a nation act either in its own defense or in the defense of its allies against unjust aggression.

2) There is *legitimate authority* to declare war. Those who declare war must have the authority to do so in order for the war to be considered a just one.

3) There is the *right intention*. The intention of those waging war must be the establishment and securing of long-lasting or permanent peace.

4) There must be a *reasonable probability of success*. In order to be justified in going to war, there must be a reasonable hope of achieving the good ends that are being sought.

5) There is *proportionality between the cause for going to war and the means used in waging war.* The overall aim in going to war must be sufficiently good to outweigh the anticipated evils of waging war.

6) Going to war is the *last resort*. All peaceful alternatives must have been exhausted before waging war can be considered just.

**Just Conduct in War**

Even if all of the conditions for engaging in a war have been met, the war itself may be unjust due to the types of actions it involves. In order for conduct in war to be morally permissible, two conditions must be met:

1) *The principle of proportionality*. The force used must be proportional to the military objectives. Whereas the condition of proportionality under the first part of the doctrine requires that the overall purpose in going to war outweigh the anticipated evils, proportionality here refers to the use of particular force in relation to specific military objectives of winning the war or the battle (e.g., rape and torture of civilian women and children may demoralize the enemy and lead to a quicker end to the war, but would nevertheless not be justified).

2) *The principle of discrimination*. The use of force must be such that it allows for the distinction between combatants and noncombatants. It is permissible to undertake an action in which the deaths of noncombatants are foreseen as long as those deaths are not strictly intended.

3) Closely related to the requirement of discrimination is *the doctrine of double effect*. According to this doctrine, it is permissible to perform acts that have both good and bad consequences if:

a) The good consequences and not the bad are intended.

b) The bad consequences are not used as means to bring about the good end.

c) The good consequences are proportional to or greater than the bad consequences.

# Background Readings

## This section includes the following:

1) An article from *The Christian Science Monitor* that appeared shortly before the Gulf War began. It summarizes the pre-war ethical debate.

2) An editorial piece by Ruth Rosen, professor of history at the University of California, written months after the conclusion of the Gulf War. She was opposed to the Gulf War, but here she muses on her own internal conflicts about acceptable grounds for war.

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## Suggestions for further reading:

Bok, Sissela. *A Strategy for Peace: Human Values and the Threat of War.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1989. Moral philosophy that addresses the question of war, especially in light of the existence of nuclear weapons.

Dyer, Gwynne. *War.* New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1985. A fascinating history of warfare and its technologies.

Mandelbaum, Michael. *The Fate of Nations: The Search for National Security in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. A readable explanation of how several nations have tried to achieve national security and why they defined security in the ways they did.

Payne, Samuel B., Jr. *The Conduct of War: An Introduction to Modern Warfare.* Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1989. Examines the political, military, and technical dimensions of modern war.

Regan, Richard J., S. J. *The Moral Dimensions of Politics.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. Chapters 6-8 examine the justice of conventional warfare, and of military intervention and support of revolutionary wars.

Sharp, Gene. *Gandhi as a Political Strategist.* Boston, MA: Porter Sargent Publishers, Inc., 1979. This book examines the ways in which Gandhi used the nonviolent method to promote change; chapter 10 examines "types of principled nonviolence." Chapter 12 explores the relationship between morality and politics.

Walzer, Michael. *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations.* New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1977. A well-known modern consideration of just-war theory.

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GULF CRISIS

ANALYSIS

# US Debates Issue of 'Just War'

By Marshall Ingwerson
Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

WASHINGTON

RARELY in history has the war option provided so much time and information for thorough public debate.

The result has been a minimum of rancor and name-calling in favor of serious-minded discourse on the morality of going to war in the Persian Gulf.

When Congress finally voted on Saturday, it supported President Bush's position, but with much the same share of doubt and dissent that is reflected in public opinion surveys. Much of the debate has followed the traditional moral framework for weighing "just" wars.

President Bush's own rationale has shifted, at least in emphasis, toward moral arguments. In the first few days after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the president spoke of the threat Saddam Hussein represented to the "American way of life." He was referring to the threat, in particular, to the American standard of living should Iraq seize control of Saudi oil fields as well as Kuwait's.

Weeks later, Secretary of State James Baker III made an even more direct appeal to the economic self-interest of Americans when he said the Gulf confrontation was about protecting jobs.

By the time Mr. Bush made a televised address to a joint session of Congress on Sept. 11, he was no longer making pocketbook appeals. His case was for fighting to protect a new, more cooperative and harmonious, world order against a reckless aggressor.

The new world order that Bush sees at stake here is one under which the international community can unite massively to put down a rogue aggressor. During the cold war, the superpowers suppressed regional conflicts in their efforts to contain each other's sphere of influence.

Iraq has provided the first test of whether a post-cold war stability can be achieved on the basis of cooperation and international law. The character of Saddam Hussein makes this a stark test, with few moral ambiguities.

One concern is certainly stopping Saddam Hussein himself. While few people believe he threatens the world on a Hitlerian scale, the lesson of Hitler was that he could have been stopped early; that appeasement led him on.

### Concern over UN's role

Another concern is establishing the usefulness of the United Nations for collective security in the world. If the UN allows Iraq to escape with aggression, says John Gaddis, a diplomatic historian, it will go the way of the League of Nations after it failed to respond to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931.

Another, similar concern is setting an example showing that aggression doesn't pay in the post-cold war world. At root, the argument for risking the lives of American, Iraqi, and other soldiers in this confrontation is that it will save lives in the long run – as well as the sovereignty of nations.

Some people are skeptical that this is Bush's true motivation. Among the skeptics are those picketing the White House and disrupting the Senate debate with

**The debate has – mostly unconsciously – probed for the criteria of the 'just war' tradition, a moral theory for when war is just that has evolved out of Christian tradition.**

the slogan, "No blood for oil," implying that the impending war is to keep the price or control of oil in friendly hands.

If the debate in Congress is any reflection of public opinion, however, then most Americans seem to see larger principles at stake. The main debate over American policy in the Gulf is not over ends but means – whether all peaceful means have been exhausted. A large minority in Congress wants much more time for economic sanctions or diplomacy to persuade Saddam to leave Kuwait.

The debate has – mostly unconsciously – probed for the criteria of the "just war" tradition, a moral theory for when war is just that has evolved out of Christian tradition. The seven elements of a just war are closely modeled in the UN Charter and most international law, according to David Little, senior scholar at the United States Institute for Peace.

One element, the one most at issue in American Gulf policy, is that war be used only as a last resort. The leadership in both the House and Senate, for example, holds that economic sanctions against Iraq offer the hope that war will not be necessary. The president holds that sanctions will never force Iraq out of Kuwait.

### Sanctions not enough

One senior White House official explains that the administration never believed sanctions would starve Saddam out of Kuwait, only that they would convince him of world solidarity against him. It has not worked, the official says.

Another element of the just war that is under dispute is that the costs of going to war are proportionate to the benefits. A show of American force against an Arab regime – even an unpopular one – risks setting off dangerous instabilities in a volatile region. Yet so does a moral victory for Saddam.

### German, Japanese role

Proportionality is at issue in another way as well. The nations most dependent on Kuwaiti oil, Germany and Japan, are contributing little money and no military forces to the Gulf coalition. The Saudis have promised to pay half the cost of the war effort, but the forces are at least 70 percent American.

The just war also requires a legitimate public declaration of war, to prevent private or illicit uses of war. Bush now has authorization from the UN and the Congress to use force to free Kuwait. If he had acted without the support of Congress, he would have strengthened the suspicion of some that his mouves are partly personal – to win against Saddam and enhance his political presuge.

Dr. Little notes that the just war tradition is not the only moral framework for considering the use of force. One, nearly obsolete now, is the Holy War, or crusade. But the pacifist view that opposes war under any circumstances is growing, he says, and there is declining faith in war as a tool.



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The Los Angeles Times Sunday, July 7, 1991

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RUTH ROSEN

# Seeking Peace in a Living War Museum

■ In Normandy and Brittany, the ghosts of many centuries ask what *you* would have done.

I hadn't planned on taking a busman's holiday. Preoccupied with anti-war activity since last August, I felt a deep need to leave the country and put the Gulf War behind me. I thought I was going off to explore the culture and prehistoric megaliths of Normandy and Brittany in western France. Instead, the moral anguish of war followed me across the Atlantic.

I left the United States just before the great military parades and celebrations began in early June. The country seemed infatuated with itself: The war toys and game plans had worked; the enemy crisis had been temporarily solved. Americans seemed satisfied with government censorship and the antiseptic, Nintendo portrayal of war. True, some nagging doubts had surfaced—Iraq's nuclear arsenal appeared to be intact, the Republican Guard had not been destroyed, the Kurds had been massacred and thousands of Iraqi children were dying from malnutrition. But military success had finally vanquished the Vietnam syndrome. The process of normalization had quietly begun; the pundits demoted Saddam Hussein from Hitler to president of Iraq. The agony and moral anguish that ought to accompany an act of mass killing—yes, even in war—seemed wholly absent from American public culture.

Not so in Europe, where war has left permanent scars on the land and psyches of its people. I had always wanted to see the great medieval Tapestry of Bayeux, somehow forgetting that it is basically a tale of betrayal and war. The length of a football field, this stunningly embroidered linen tapestry vividly recounts William the Conqueror's crushing defeat of England in 1066. At the end of the exhibit, a short, polite essay—presumably designed to pacify British tourists—notes that there are conflicting interpretations of the event. To the Normans, William the Conqueror's military success signaled the expansion of a superior culture to the barbarians across the channel. To England, his triumph meant the rape of its women, the death of its children, the destruction of its society. I wondered if such multiple perspectives of a war were acceptable only after 900 years had passed.

On the windy beaches of Normandy, however, I saw no conflicting interpretation, only the horror of fascism writ large. The sheer brilliance and audacity of the Allies' invasion of Normandy temporarily converted me into a war buff. I wondered how many Americans knew that the British had built and towed an artificial port to Normandy so that the Allies could safely land their tanks and Jeeps. At Omaha Beach, I stood atop the daunting cliffs from which bunkered Nazis fought off American soldiers charging ashore. Nearby, at the American cemetery, the sun cast harsh shadows on the endless rows of white crosses under which thousands of American soldiers are buried. No moral ambiguity here; just melancholy at the enormity of loss.

In the small village of Malestroit, the Museum of the Breton Resistance confronted me with the moral ambiguities that touched daily life during World War II. Each act of sabotage or assassination attempt against the Nazi occupying forces in Brittany brought reprisals against dozens or hundreds of ordinary citizens. In a perfectly re-created Breton village square, a photographic mural depicts the Nazis' execution of a suspected resistance fighter. A simple basket filled with fruit, the camouflage that local women used for smuggling resistance information, reminded me of the consequences these tough villagers faced: capture by the Nazis, the agony of having ignited reprisals against neighbors, the shame of doing nothing at all.

Weeks of holiday spent brooding over war provided no new answers, only questions to be confronted in fear and trembling: What constitutes a just war? How and when can a society accept multiple interpretations of a war? For what would I sacrifice my life?

Unlike Americans, Europeans cannot forget the blood-soaked reality of war. The American celebratory mood seems adolescent, even craven, in comparison. The country doth protest too much.

Some say that my obsession with seeking alternative resolutions to aggression and conflict is hopelessly naive. I remind them that slavery was once a perfectly legal and socially acceptable institution. Upon my return, however, it is not my own preoccupation with the moral ambiguities of war that worries me but the soul of a nation that regards war with childlike delight.

*Ruth Rosen, professor of history at UC Davis, writes regularly on political culture and is the author of "The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America."*



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# Suggestions for Leading *Are There Reasonable Grounds for War?*

All discussion groups are different. The participants, the dynamics of your particular group, and the nature of the subject at hand make this so. The following suggestions are not intended to be definitive, but rather to offer general guidelines to help structure a discussion using this material.

The aim of a small-group discussion is for participants to learn from each other. The leader's job is to create an atmosphere respectful of all feelings and to challenge the participants to go beyond their individual opinions and to consider alternative points of view.

**One or two sessions?**

The emphasis of this program should be guided by the interests of your particular group. If you are choosing to use this program for only one session, you should probably choose one or the other of the parts as the focus rather than trying to squeeze both into a single session. The following suggestions treat each of the two parts as the centerpiece of a two-hour discussion.

**Preparing for the discussion**

"A Framework for Discussion" will give you a sense of how the issue of war is presented in this material. General advice for leading a discussion is offered in "Leading a Study Circle." Make sure that you can furnish for participants the names and addresses of your national legislators, as well as the address of the president.

**Explaining the ground rules**

After asking participants to introduce themselves, make sure that everyone understands what a study circle is and what is expected of participants. You may wish to say something like the following: "My role is to keep discussion focused and moving along. Your role is to share your concerns and beliefs and to listen carefully to others. You should be willing to examine your own beliefs in light of what others say."

**Starting the discussion**

To involve participants from the start of the discussion, you may ask them to talk about how the issue of war has affected them personally, or when the issue of war became pertinent to them. Was there a point at which they realized that they wanted to or could have an impact on policies regarding war?

Depending upon what is in the news at the time of your discussion, you may choose to ask participants to discuss any potential use of our armed forces.

**Part – Ethical Considerations**

Your initial aim in discussing the four positions presented in this section is to help the group see the appeal of each of the positions, no matter what the personal inclinations of group members may be. One way to do this is to introduce each position in turn and ask whether a participant would volunteer to explain how it is that a reasonable person could accept this position.

For the remainder of the session, open the floor for a general discussion of these positions. Some questions that may help you focus this part of the discussion appear in "Suggested Discussion Questions"; when possible, use them to help participants clarify their own views. Encourage group members to question each other in a helpful way.

**Part II – Policy Considerations**

Your first task, as with the previous section, is to help the group see the possible appeal of each of the commonly accepted grounds for war.

The questions that are presented within the participants' material should stimulate con-

sideration of the implications of each of these reasons. Encourage the application of the insights gained from the section on ethical considerations, especially if an entire discussion session has been devoted to them. Other questions that may help you focus this part of the discussion appear in "Suggested Discussion Questions."

**Closing the discussion**

Whether you meet once or twice, you might close the discussion by helping the group identify and articulate any common ground that exists among the members. Also, what are the major areas of disagreement? Remember, reaching group consensus is not the goal of the conversation.

You might also ask whether anyone's views have changed or become more clear during the course of the discussion. This question can provide an opening for those who came into the discussion without a clear stand and who may have been quiet up until this point.

Another possibility for closing the discussion: ask participants to discuss what they would most like to convey to their elected representatives about the issue of war. Encourage participants to make contact with their elected officials about any policy decisions related to these views.

# Suggested Discussion Questions

## Questions for "Part I – Ethical Considerations"

• Regarding each of the positions: What is most appealing to you about this position?

• Regarding each of the positions: What is the strongest criticism of this position?

• Try to imagine each of the positions as a guide to national behavior. Which of these positions most closely approximates the position usually held by policymakers?

• Should the morality of collective action (for example of a government) be judged in the same way as the morality of an individual?

• Without national consensus on which ethical standards to apply to policymaking in war, who should decide which ethical standards we should adhere to? Should the opinions of some – for example, spiritual leaders – receive greater weight than those of others? Which spiritual leaders?

• Do you think it likely that ethical principles will ever be the primary guide to the behavior of our leaders? Why or why not? Should they be the primary guide?

• What should be our government's position toward conscientious objectors?

## Questions for "Part II – Policy Considerations"

• Regarding each of the four commonly accepted reasons for war: Under what conditions would this constitute reasonable grounds for war?

• Regarding each of the reasons: Are there any conditions under which this would not constitute reasonable grounds for war?

• Taken singularly, do any of these reasons constitute adequate grounds for war, or would you require some combination of reasons?

• Would you add to the list of commonly accepted grounds for war?

• For each of the reasons, how should we decide whether the costs of going to war are worth what might be gained?

• If moral principles are not our primary guide to policy, according to what principles should we decide what is "reasonable"?

• Without national consensus on how to define the "national interest" in times of war, who should decide? If you believe that our elected leaders have been delegated this responsibility, should we attempt to influence their thinking when a war seems imminent? once a war has begun? Which elected officials should have the final responsibility for the decision to resort to force, the Congress or the president? Why?

# Leading a Study Circle

The study circle leader is the most important person in determining its success or failure. It is the leader's responsibility to moderate the discussion by asking questions, identifying key points, and managing the group process. While doing all this, the leader must be friendly, understanding, and supportive.

The leader does not need to be an expert. However, thorough familiarity with the reading material and previous reflection about the directions in which the discussion might go will make the leader more effective and more comfortable in this important role.

The most difficult aspects of leading discussion groups include keeping discussion focused, handling aggressive participants, and keeping one's own ego at bay. A background of leading small group discussions or meetings is helpful. The following suggestions and principles of group leadership will be useful even for experienced leaders.

• **"Beginning is half," says an old Chinese proverb.** Set a friendly and relaxed atmosphere from the start. A quick review of the suggestions for participants will help ensure that everyone understands the ground rules for the discussion.

• **Be an active listener.** You will need to truly hear and understand what people say if you are to guide the discussion effectively. Listening carefully will set a good example for participants and will alert you to potential conflicts.

• **Stay neutral and be cautious about expressing your own values.** As the leader, you have considerable power with the group. That power should be used only for the purpose of furthering the discussion and not for establishing the correctness of a particular viewpoint.

• **Utilize open-ended questions.** Questions such as, "What other possibilities have we not yet considered?" will encourage discussion rather than elicit short, specific answers and are especially helpful for drawing out quiet members of the group.

• **Draw out quiet participants.** Do not allow anyone to sit quietly or to be forgotten by the group. Create an opportunity for each participant to contribute. The more you know about each person in the group, the easier this will be.

• **Don't be afraid of pauses and silences.** People need time to think and reflect. Sometimes silence will help someone build up the courage to make a valuable point. Leaders who tend to be impatient may find it helpful to count silently to 10 after asking a question.

• **Do not allow the group to make you the expert or "answer person."** You should not play the role of final arbiter. Let the participants decide what they believe. Allow group members to correct each other when a mistake is made.

• **Don't always be the one to respond to comments and questions.** Encourage interaction among the group. Participants should be conversing with each other, not just with the leader. Questions or comments that are directed at the leader can often be deflected to another member of the group.

• **Don't allow the group to get hung up on unprovable "facts" or assertions.** Disagreements about basic facts are common for con-

troversial issues. If there is debate over a fact or figure, ask the group if that fact is relevant to the discussion. In some cases, it is best to leave the disagreement unresolved and move on.

• **Do not allow the aggressive, talkative person or faction to dominate.** Doing so is a sure recipe for failure. One of the most difficult aspects of leading a discussion is restraining domineering participants. Don't let people call out and gain control of the floor. If you allow this to happen the aggressive will dominate, you may lose control, and the more polite people will become angry and frustrated.

• **Use conflict productively and don't allow participants to personalize their disagreements.** Do not avoid conflict, but try to keep discussion focused on the point at hand. Since everyone's opinion is important in a study circle, participants should feel safe saying what they really think – even if it's unpopular.

• **Synthesize or summarize the discussion occasionally.** It is helpful to consolidate related ideas to provide a solid base for the discussion to build upon.

• **Ask hard questions.** Don't allow the discussion to simply confirm old assumptions. Avoid following any "line," and encourage participants to re-examine their assumptions. Call attention to points of view that have not been mentioned or seriously considered, whether you agree with them or not.

• **Don't worry about attaining consensus.** It's good for the study circle to have a sense of where participants stand, but it's not necessary to achieve consensus. In some cases a group will be split; there's no need to hammer out agreement.

• **Close the session with a brief question that each participant may respond to in turn.** This will help them review their progress in the meeting and give a sense of closure.

# Suggestions for Participants

The goal of a study circle is not to learn a lot of facts, or to attain group consensus, but rather to deepen each person's understanding of the issue. This can occur in a focused discussion when people exchange views freely and consider a variety of viewpoints. The process – democratic discussion among equals – is as important as the content.

The following points are intended to help you make the most of your study circle experience and to suggest ways in which you can help the group.

• **Listen carefully to others.** Make sure you are giving everyone the chance to speak.

• **Maintain an open mind.** You don't score points by rigidly sticking to your early statements. Feel free to explore ideas that you have rejected or failed to consider in the past.

• **Strive to understand the position of those who disagree with you.** Your own knowledge is not complete until you understand other participants' points of view and why they feel the way they do. It is important to respect people who disagree with you; they have reasons for their beliefs. You should be able to make a good case for positions you disagree with. This level of comprehension and empathy will make you a much better advocate for whatever position you come to.

• **Help keep the discussion on track.** Make sure your remarks are relevant; if necessary, explain how your points are related to the discussion. Try to make your points while they are pertinent.

• **Speak your mind freely, but don't monopolize the discussion.** If you tend to talk a lot in groups, leave room for quieter people. Be aware that some people may want to speak but are intimidated by more assertive people.

• **Address your remarks to the group rather than the leader.** Feel free to address your remarks to a particular participant, especially one who has not been heard from or who you think may have special insight. Don't hesitate to question other participants to learn more about their ideas.

• **Communicate your needs to the leader.** The leader is responsible for guiding the discussion, summarizing key ideas, and soliciting clarification of unclear points, but he/she may need advice on when this is necessary. Chances are you are not alone when you don't understand what someone has said.

• **Value your own experience and opinions.** Everyone in the group, including you, has unique knowledge and experience; this variety makes the discussion an interesting learning experience for all. Don't feel pressured to speak, but realize that failing to speak means robbing the group of your wisdom.

• **Engage in friendly disagreement.** Differences can invigorate the group, especially when it is relatively homogeneous on the surface. Don't hesitate to challenge ideas you disagree with. Don't be afraid to play devil's advocate, but don't go overboard. If the discussion becomes heated, ask yourself and others whether reason or emotion is running the show.

• **Remember that humor and a pleasant manner can go far in helping you make your points.** A belligerent attitude may prevent acceptance of your assertions. Be aware of how your body language can close you off from the group.

# Follow-up Form

Please take a few minutes to complete and return this follow-up form. Your answers will help us improve the Public Talk Series material and make it a more valuable resource.

1) Did you use *Are There Reasonable Grounds for War?* ___ yes ___ no
If so, how? (check all that apply)
___ in a discussion group ___ for reference or research material ___ for lecture or classroom use

2) What did you think of the program?

| | very good | | | | poor |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| content | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| format | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| balance, fairness | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| suggestions for leaders | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| suggestions for participants | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| supplemental readings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

3) Please answer the following if you held or were part of a discussion group.

Your role was ___ the organizer ___ the discussion leader ___ a participant

What was the sponsoring organization (if any)? _____

How many attended? _____

Where was the program held? city _____ state _____

How many times did your group meet to discuss this topic? ___

Participants in this discussion group (check all that apply)
___ came together just for this discussion
___ hold discussions regularly
___ meet regularly, but not usually for issue-oriented discussion

Would you use study circles again? ____ yes ____ no

4) What future topics would you like to see in SCRC's Public Talk Series?

5) Other comments?

Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

_____

_____

Phone _____

Please return to the Study Circles Resource Center, PO Box 203, Pomfret, CT 06258
or FAX to (203) 928-3713.
See reverse side for information on other Public Talk Series programs.

# Public Talk Series Programs and Other Resources Available from the Study Circles Resource Center

Publications of the Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC) include the Public Talk Series (PTS); training material for study circle organizers, leaders, and writers; a quarterly newsletter; a clearinghouse list of study circle material developed by a variety of organizations; and a bibliography on study circles and small-group learning. Prices for PTS programs are noted below. (You are welcome to order a single copy of PTS programs and then photocopy as many as necessary for your group.) All other publications are free of charge.

## Public Talk Series (PTS) programs

___ Special 1992 **Election Year Discussion Set** $5.00 for the set:
- *The Health Care Crisis in America*
- *Welfare Reform: What Should We Do for Our Nation's Poor?*
- *Revitalizing America's Economy for the 21st Century*
- *The Role of the United States in a Changing World*

**Domestic Policy discussion programs** - $2.00 each
___ 203 - *Revitalizing America's Economy for the 21st Century*
___ 401 - *The Health Care Crisis in America*
___ 501 - *Homelessness in America: What Should We Do?*
___ 302 - *The Right to Die*
___ 301 - *The Death Penalty*
___ 304 - *Welfare Reform: What Should We Do for Our Nation's Poor?*
___ 202 - *American Society and Economic Policy: What Should Our Goals Be?*

**Foreign Policy discussion programs** - $2.00 each
___ 303 - *Are There Reasonable Grounds for War?*
___ 106 - *International Environmental Issues: U.S. Policy Choices* *
___ 105 - *Facing a Disintegrated Soviet Union* *
___ 107 - *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Looking for a Lasting Peace* *
___ 102 - *America's Role in the Middle East* *
___ 104 - *The Role of the United States in a Changing World* *

* based on material developed by the Choices for the 21st Century Education Project of the Center for Foreign Policy Development at Brown University

## Other resources from the Study Circles Resource Center

**Pamphlets**
___ "An Introduction to Study Circles" (20 pages)
___ "Guidelines for Organizing and Leading a Study Circle" (32 pages)
___ "Guidelines for Developing Study Circle Course Material" (32 pages)

**Resource Briefs** (single pages)
___ "What Is a Study Circle?"
___ "Leading a Study Circle"
___ "Organizing a Study Circle"
___ "The Role of the Participant"
___ "Developing Study Circle Course Material"
___ "What Is the Study Circles Resource Center?"
___ "The Study Circles Resource Center Clearinghouse"

**Connections** (single-page descriptions of programs)
___ Adult Religious Education
___ Youth Programs
___ Study Circle Researchers
___ Unions

***Focus on Study Circles*** (free quarterly newsletter)
___ Sample copy
___ Subscription

**Other Resources**
___ Clearinghouse list of study circle material
___ Annotated bibliography on study circles, small-group learning, and participatory democracy

Please send in your order, with payment if you order PTS programs, with your follow-up form on reverse.



Study Circles Resource Center • PO Box 203 • Pomfret, CT 06258 • (203) 928-2616 • FAX (203) 928-3713